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Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: March 18, 1959

SUBJECT: Berlin Situation

PARTICIPANTS: M. Louis Jacquinot, Minister of State
M. Hervé Alphand, French Ambassador

Mr. Robert Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary *RM*
Mr. Matthew J. Looram, WE

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M. Jacquinot asked what Mr. Murphy's views were with regard to the danger of war over the Berlin issue. Mr. Murphy replied that he did not think the Russians wanted war any more than we did. He thought that it was absolutely essential to remain firm on the fundamentals of the issue. It was very unwise, he thought, for some people to say it was not worth having a nuclear war over Berlin. If the question were posed in such a manner, we had already lost from the outset. We should rather face up squarely to the issue that if the Russians wanted war, we would be prepared to have one. He thought that if this were made clear, the Russians would be willing to come to a peaceful agreement over the matter.

M. Jacquinot said that he had been most impressed by the President's speech. The French Government's views were exactly the same. Mr. Murphy concurred pointing out, however, that for domestic reasons the British Government was anxious to agree in advance to a summit meeting. We believed that we should first see whether any progress were made in the Foreign Ministers' meeting before determining whether or not a summit meeting were justified. French Ambassador Alphand stated that an article in the New York Times this morning contended that the U.S. Government had now agreed to participating in a summit meeting, irrespective of the outcome of the Foreign Ministers' meeting. Mr. Murphy stated this was wholly without foundation. He said the President's Monday night address stated the United States position.

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